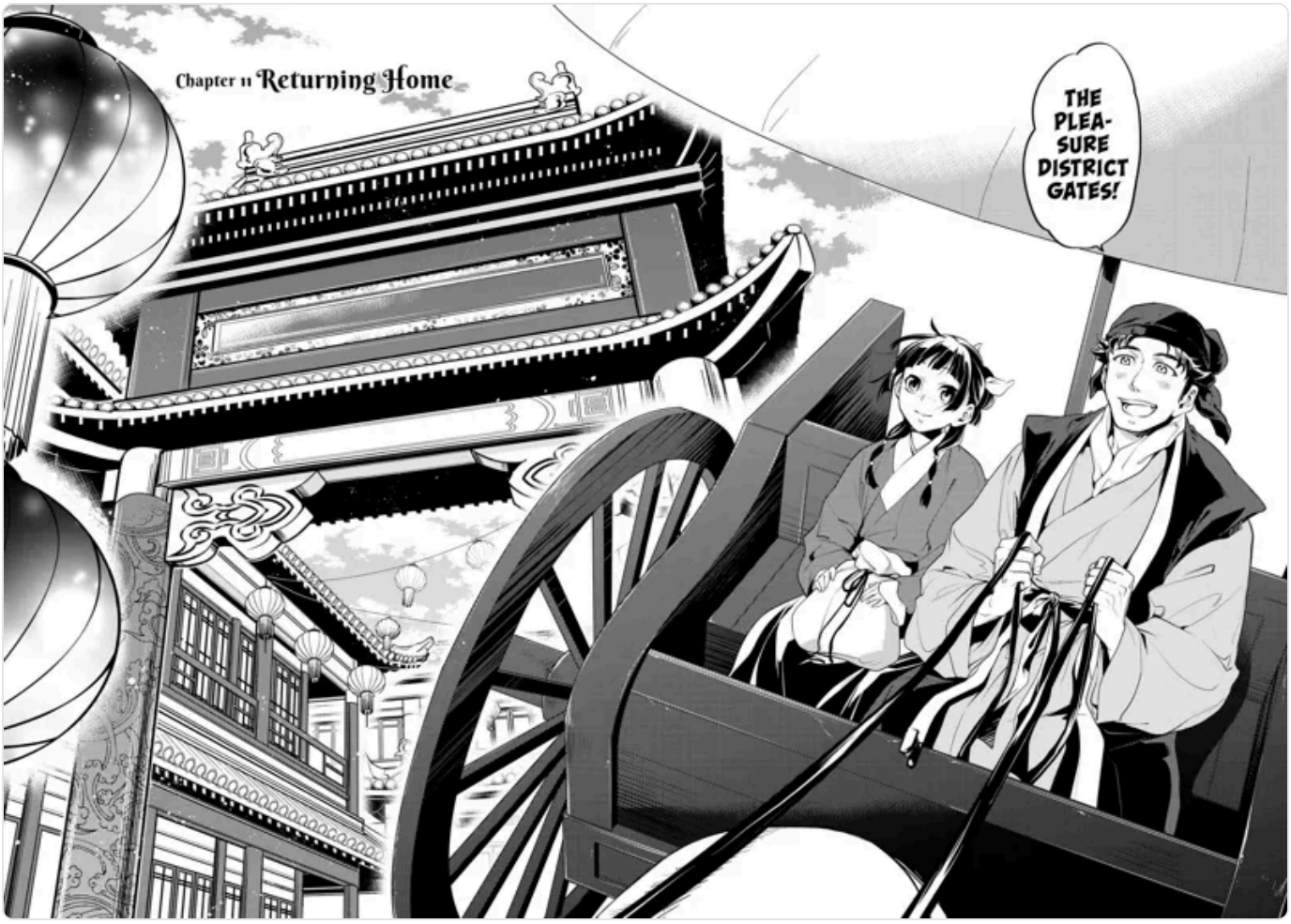
Chapter 11
AND SO...
...IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HER, I'M AFRAID SHE'S LEFT ALREADY...
...FOR A THREE-DAY VISIT HOME.

THE PLEASURE DISTRICT I CALL HOME ISN'T THAT FAR AWAY.
IT'S IN WALKING DISTANCE ONCE WE'RE PAST THE WALLS AND THE MOAT.
TAKING A CARRIAGE LIKE THIS IS OVER-DOING IT.
INNER COURT
THOUGH THE INNER COURT IS ABOUT AS BIG AS A REGULAR TOWN...
...IT'S ENTIRELY ENCLOSED WITHIN THE CAPITAL ITSELF.
THE PLEASURE DISTRICT IS LOCATED OPPOSITE THE IMPERIAL PALACE.
PLEASURE DISTRICT
IMPERIAL CAPITAL GATES
HE SURE CHANGED HIS TUNE ONCE HE STARTED ACTUALLY BELIEVING ME.

EVEN THE COMMON FOLK...
...REVERE THE THREE PRINCESSES OF VERDI-GRIS AS HEAVENLY IDOLS.
WELL ...
...I SUPPOSE I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY HE'D WANT TO HUM.
MERELY HAVING TEA WITH THEM WILL COST YOU SILVER.
IT'S CONSID-ERED AN HONOR JUST TO BE ABLE TO MEET THEM IN PERSON.
OH!
I CAN SEE THEM NOW!


Chapter 11 Returning Home
THE PLEA-SURE DISTRICT GATES!

THEY MAY ALL BE CALLED COURTESANS, BUT WHILE SOME SELL THEIR BODIES, OTHERS SELL THEIR TALENTS.
THE MORE POPULAR THE COURTESAN, THE FEWER CLIENTS SHE SEES, AND ALL THE MORE PRECIOUS SHE BECOMES.
THE PRICE OF A SINGLE NIGHT WITH SUCH A WOMAN IS DEAR, INDEED.

...BUT OF COURSE, IT IS NO EASY FEAT TO ACHIEVE.
...MANY A LOCAL GIRL, ASPIRING TO BE ONE OF THEM, HAS KNOCKED ON THE GATES OF THE PLEASURE DISTRICT...
IN ADMIRATION OF THESE WOMEN AND THE LIVES THEY LEAD...
...AREN'T GUARANTEED FUTURE SUCCESS.
IN THIS WORLD, EVEN THE YOUNG, LIVE-IN APPRENTICE COURTESANS...
SO THIS IS THE FAMOUS VERDIGRIS!
YES.
WE'RE HERE. THIS IS THE PLACE, RIGHT?

VERDI-
GRIS—
EMPLOYING COURTESANS WHO RANGE FROM AVERAGE RANK TO CREAM OF THE CROP...
VERDIGRIS
...AND HOUSED IN THIS MANY-STORIED EDIFICE, IT IS ONE OF THE MOST VENERABLE BROTHELS IN THE IMPERIAL CAPITAL'S PLEASURE DISTRICT.
VERDIGRIS
IT'S HUGE!
HIYA!
IT'S BEEN TOO LONG, GRANNY!
GRUMPY
4

HOW IS EVERY-O—
DON'T YOU...
TMP
PUNCH
GWEH !!
...“HIYA” MEEEEE, MISSY!
YOU STUPID LITTLE GIRL!
UGH!

SHE USED TO PUNCH ME LIKE THIS ALL THE TIME TO GET ME TO THROW UP POISONS.
FOOLISH CHILD!
YOU POISONED YOURSELF AGAIN, DIDN'T YOU?!
BLEEERGH!
THIS SURE TAKES ME BACK.
SLUMP
OH? ARE YOU OUR GUEST OF HONOR?
MEET THE MADAM OF VERDIGRIS.
WHAT'S THIS OLD LADY'S PROB-LEM?!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
HMPH!
GRANNY, I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD BE SAYING ALL THAT TO HIS FACE.
WOBBLE
MO...
FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD, YOU'RE ON TRACK FOR A SUC-CESSFUL CAREER.
HANDSOME FEATURES, YES...AND A DECENT PHYSIQUE TOO, I SEE.

YOU.
GET PAILING DOWN HERE.
SHE'S FREE TODAY, IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN.
PAI-LING...
ゴクリ
GULP
BADUM BADUM
ドキー
ドキ
NOW I'M GETTING NERVOUS.
MISS PAILING, WHO'S KNOWN FOR HER DANCING, HUH?
TMP
たっ
TMP
たっ
TMP
たっ
SIR LI HAKU?
ARE YOU CONFIDENT IN YOUR ARM MUSCLES?
ムキッ
FLEX
YES, I'M ONE FOR TRAINING.

HUH?
THIS WAY, PLEASE.
GIVE IT YOUR BEST, NOW!
WELL, YOU NEVER KNOW. SHE MIGHT JUST...
HMM...
YOU DON'T SAY?
UH... UH-HUH!
MY, WHAT LOVELY MUSCLES YOU HAVE!
もみ
FONDLE FONDLE
もみ
HEH!
IF HE GETS TO EXPERIENCE A PLEASANT DREAM THIS NIGHT, IT'LL BECOME A MEMORY HE'LL NEVER FORGET.
...BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY NEVER FALL IN LOVE.
HIGH-RANKING COUR-TESANS RARELY SLEEP WITH THEIR CLIENTELE ...

MAO-MAO.
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE ...
ゴゴゴゴ
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
I WAS OFF TOILING IN THE INNER COURT.
DIDN'T YOU GET MY MESSAGE?
ゴゴゴゴ
...JUST DISAP-PEARING LIKE THAT WITHOUT A WORD FOR TEN WHOLE MONTHS.
ヒ
FLINCH
ア!!
HAD I NOT, I WOULD'VE TURNED YOUR FRIEND AWAY ON SIGHT...
...NOT TREATED HIM LIKE A KING.
I KNOW. I KNOW!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

HERE'S HALF THE WAGES I'VE EARNED FROM WORKING IN THE INNER COURT SO FAR.
I ASKED THEM TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION AND PAY ME IN ADVANCE.
OHH?
THIS AIN'T NEARLY ENOUGH, THOUGH.
WELL, I WASN'T EXPECTING YOU TO ACTUALLY SERVE UP PAILING.
CAN'T YOU GIVE ME A DISCOUNT IF ALL HE'S GONNA DO IS HAVE TEA WITH HER?
EVEN JUST A TEENSY LITTLE ONE...
YOU FOOL.
PAILING'S NOT GOING TO LET THAT BRAWNY HULK OF A MAN WALK OUT OF HERE WITHOUT HAVING HERSELF A BIT OF FUN, AND YOU KNOW IT.
YEAH, THAT DID OCCUR TO ME...
BUT IT'S OUT OF MY HANDS...
YOU WISH!
THAT'S GOING ON YOUR TAB.
HEH HEH HEH!
LIKE I SAID, I CAN'T AFFORD IT.

YOU KNOW YOU CAN ALWAYS PAY WITH YOUR BODY AS A LAST RESORT.
AWW, DON'T BE LIKE THAT.
THEN RUSTLE ME UP SOME MORE BUSI-NESS.
I NEED MORE CLIENTS WE CAN DRAIN DRY FOR A LONG TIME TO COME, LIKE THE LAD YOU BROUGHT HERE TODAY.
ERM...
WE GET ALL KINDS, EVEN ECCENTRICS WHO'D BE KEEN ON DAMAGED GOODS LIKE YOU.
ガガ SHIVER
ガガ SHIVER
I STILL HAVE A YEAR LEFT TO WORK OFF AT THE INNER COURT, THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
WOULD EUNUCHS COUNT?
BUT I MIGHT BE ABLE TO ENTICE GAO SHUN OR THE QUACK.
HE'S OUT, THOUGH.
THE LADIES WOULD PROBABLY ALL SET THEIR SIGHTS ON HIM AND DRIVE THE BROTHEL INTO THE GROUND.

I'M SURE YOUR OLD MAN'S HOME.
GO ON. GIT.
MAO-MAO.
HMMM...
YEAH.
I WILL.
...AND THE SCENERY COMPLETELY CHANGES FROM THAT OF THE PLEASURE DISTRICT.
WALK ONE STREET OVER...

BEGGARS AND SYPHILITIC STREET-WALKERS.
ROWS OF MISER-ABLE SHACKS.
CREAK
キィィ…

I'M HOME ...
...PA.
OH! GOOD TO HAVE YOU HOME.
YOU SURE TOOK YOUR TIME.

HERE.
GLUB ぽ
BLUB ぽ
AHH...
HOME AT LAST.
SLUUURP
ずずず
SO WHAT HAP-PENED WAS...
...I WENT OUT TO PICK SOME PLANTS FOR MY FRECKLES THAT DAY.
AND WHILE I WAS OUT THERE ...

I SEE.
MY TERM OF SERVICE HASN'T RUN OUT YET, SO I HAVE TO GO BACK TO THE INNER COURT THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
SNAP
SO THAT'S HOW...
...I CAME TO BE A FOOD TASTER AT THE JADE PALACE.
OKAY. I'LL DO THAT.
GO BATHE TOMORROW MORNING AT VERDIGRIS.
YAAAWN
I'M TIRED, BUT I'D LIKE A BATH.
KRAKL
KRAKL
WOBBLE
WOBBLE

...THE INNER COURT, HM?
MUST BE FATE.
CHIRP
CHIRP
COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO!
HUH?
PA'S NOT HERE.
MMM.

THE HOE'S GONE, SO HE MUST BE OUT IN THE FIELD.
HE'S SO OLD NOW. HIS LEGS AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE.
I REALLY WISH HE'D STOP WITH THE BACK-BREAKING WORK.
BAM
THERE'S QUITE A FEW MEDICINAL HERBS GROWING HERE TOO.
OVERGROWN
MY FATHER PREFERS TO MAKE MEDICINES FROM PLANTS HE GREW HIMSELF...
...SO HE TENDS TO A FIELD IN THE FOREST OUTSIDE THE PLEASURE DISTRICT.
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM

I'VE NEVER SEEN YOU BEFORE. YOU ONE OF THE APPREN-TICES AROUND HERE?
WHAT'S WRONG?
KEEP THAT UP, AND YOU'LL BREAK DOWN THE DOOR.
WELL, IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR MY FATHER, I THINK HE'S OUT.
YANK
COME WITH ME!
QUICK!
WHOA, WAI—

OKAY, OKAY.
SO MUCH FOR MY MORNING BATH.
TMP
TMP

MISS!
I BROUGHT THE APOTH-ECARY!
AS I RECALL, THIS IS A MID-RANKING BROTHEL.
94

OH!
OVER HERE ...
!
THIS SMELL!
DASH

TIE
YOU CHECK HER.
ALL RIGHT!
I'M GOING TO CHECK FOR OBSTRUC-TIONS IN HIS THROAT!
HE ISN'T BREATHING, AND HER BREATH IS SHALLOW.
I GOT HER TO VOMIT, AT LEAST, BUT...
SMACK
IT'S NOT OVER YET!
HFF!
HFF!
GAK!
THERE'S NOTHING STUCK IN HIS THROAT.
NO PULSE.
NRGH!
THE ONLY THING COMING OUT IS SALIVA?
PUSH
PUSH

FWOO
FWOO
OH, GOOD!
KOFF!
KOFF!
KOFF!
WAIT!
DON'T GIVE HER WATER!
FWOO
FWOO
YOU THERE ...!
BRING US SOME WATER!
CHAR-COAL!
WE NEED CHAR-COAL!!
O—
OKAY!

PUSH
PUSH
PUSH
PUSH
BLARGH!
KOFF!
AH!
KOFF!

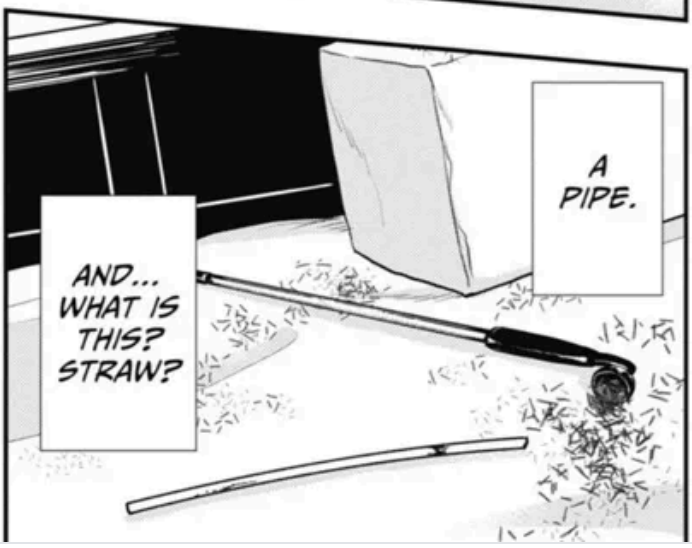
IT'S OKAY IF YOU DRINK WATER, RIGHT?
HERE.
PHEW...
YEAH, THANKS.

PTOOEY!
ペッ
GARGLE
がら
GARGLE
がら
GARGLE
がら
GARGLE
がら
GARGLE
POKE
POKE
HM?
WHO NEEDS THIS FUSS FIRST THING IN THE MORN-ING?
NEXT, I'LL NEED...
...A TABLET TO WRITE ON AND SOMETHING TO WRITE WITH.
OKAY!
HERE... THE CHAR-COAL YOU WANTED.
OH, THANK YOU.

LYING THERE IN A FAINT...
...ARE A COURTESAN AND HER CLIENT.
NOT MUCH TIME HAS PASSED SINCE THEY BOTH INGESTED POISON.

STAINS OF TWO DIFFERENT COLORS ON THE BED.

TWO DECANTERS OF LIQUOR.
A BROKEN GLASS.


A PIPE.
AND... WHAT IS THIS? STRAW?

...THIS SCATTERED TOBACCO...
ALSO ...
UM, HERE.
WHAT YOU ASKED FOR.
THEY WERE DEFINITELY UP TO NO GOOD.
HE'LL KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IF YOU GIVE HIM THIS.
BRING MY FATHER HERE. HE'S IN THE FIELD BY THE SOUTHERN OUTER WALL.
FWSH
FWSH
THANK YOU.

I'VE GIVEN THEM WHAT TREATMENT I CAN...
...BUT MAKE SURE TO HURRY.
こくり NOD
OKAY.
SIGH...
ARGH, I WANT A BATH SO BAD RIGHT NOW.
HMPH!